On the Similarity of the Psyches of Two Apparently Unrelated Peoples as Evidenced from Their Languages

by

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Abstract

The fact that each of the two languages, Bengali and English, can be translated to the other of these two languages implies that the same thoughts are expressed by both these languages. This shows that there is a good similarity between the thoughts which arise in the minds of the people who speak Bengali and the thoughts which arise in the minds of those who speak English. This implies that there is a similarity in the psyches of these two peoples, who are apparently unrelated. Here, I have also noted a few instances of similarity between the languages Bengali and English and I have concluded from this that there is a further similarity in the psyches of these two peoples. Another interesting fact which vindicates this idea is that both these languages have derived words from each other. I feel that this idea can be extrapolated to suggest that there is a similarity in the psyches of all the people of the world.

Language is but a means of expressing our thoughts. Let us illustrate some ideas here with the languages Bengali and English. Bengali is the natural means of expression of the thoughts which arise in the minds of the people who speak Bengali. English is the natural means of expression of the thoughts which arise in the minds of the people who speak this language. The fact that something spoken or written in Bengali can be translated into English and vice versa implies that the same thoughts are expressed by both these languages. This shows that there is a good similarity between the thoughts which arise in the minds of the people who speak Bengali and those which arise in the minds of the people who speak English. This implies that there is a similarity in the psyches of these two peoples, who are apparently unrelated. In the following, I observe further similarities in the psyches of these two peoples from similarities which I have found in their languages.

Let us start with two instances of similarity between these languages. The first is that of the Bengali word ‘naa’ and the English word ‘no’ which have the same meaning. These words show that the ‘n’-sound suggests the idea of negation to both the people who speak Bengali and those who speak English. The second instance is that of the Bengali expression “sanga deowa” and the English expression “to give company” which also have the same meaning. When we say that a person is giving someone company, we do not really mean that the person is, per se, giving something to someone, but, in both these languages, we express the idea using the word ‘giving’ or ‘deowa’. I feel that these two instances show that there is a similarity in the psyches of the two apparently unrelated peoples talked of here.

Now I present a few more instances of similarity between Bengali and English. The first instance is that of the Bengali word 'ma' and the English word 'mother'. These words show that in both the languages, the 'm'-sound has been used to talk about mother. In fact, in English, there is a word which is ‘ma’ that is used for mother. The second is that of the word 'pita' in Bengali and the word 'pater' in Latin (from which English has been derived). These words for father have some similarity in their pronunciations. The third instance is that of the Bengali

word 'bhrata' and the English word 'brother'. The two words sound similar. Let us now note the similarity between the expressions “Ami katha dichchhi” in Bengali and “I give my word” in English used to express “I promise”. We may also take a note of the similarity between the Bengali phrase “akkel dant” and the English phrase “wisdom tooth”. Now let us consider the following instances in which the possessive has been used in both the languages to talk about things which a person does not, per se, possess:

1. "Or vyavahar bhalo" in Bengali and "His behaviour is good" in English,
2. “Or English bhalo” in Bengali and “His English is good” in English,
3. “Or kaaj-ta bhalo” in Bengali and “His work is good” in English,
4. “Or lekha-ti bhalo” in Bengali and “His writing is good” in English,
5. “Or baktrita-ti bhalo chhilo” in Bengali and “His speech was good” in English, and
6. “Or khela bhalo chhilo” in Bengali and “His play was good” in English.

Behaviour is something that a person does; he or she does not possess it. A person speaks or writes good English; he or she, again, does not possess it. Similarly, no person actually possesses a work or a writing or a speech or a play.

The next instance of similarity is that of the Bengali phrase "baktrita deowa" and the English phrase "to give a speech". A person speaks out a speech; he or she does not, per se, give a speech. But, in both Bengali and English, we express the idea using the word 'deowa' or 'giving'. Another instance of similarity between the two languages is the following. Let us consider the Bengali sentence "O kheladhula-e bhalo" and the English sentence "He is good in Sports". In both these sentences, the suffix '-e' (in Bengali) and the word 'in' (in English)— which mean the same, which is that of being inside something or of being a part of something— have been used to express the idea, but these do not have this meaning in these sentences. Another instance is that of the Bengali phrase "Bangla-e lekha" and the English phrase "written in Bengali". In both these phrases again, the suffix '-e' (in Bengali) and the word 'in' (in English)— which have the same meaning as has been stated above— have been used, though not with this meaning. Let us now consider the expressions “taking or giving time” in English and “samay neowa” or “samay deowa” in Bengali. When we say that a person is taking or giving time, we do not really mean that the person is, per se, taking or giving something, but in both these languages, we express the idea in this way. A few similarities will also be found if we look at English and Bengali proverbs and idioms. E.g., (1) “Too many cooks spoil the broth” (English) and “Adhik sannyasee-te gajan nashta” (Bengali); (2) “He is born with a silver spoon in his mouth” (English) and “O sonar chamach mukhe niye janmechhe” (Bengali).

A few other interesting facts may be noted. One is that both the languages have a word for God (the Bengali words are ‘bhagavan’ and ‘eeshwar’) and a word for ghost (the Bengali word is ‘bhoot’). It is also interesting that both these languages have a word for thanking a person (the Bengali word is ‘dhanyavad’). Then again, not only with the speakers of Bengali and English, but possibly with speakers of every language, every person is given a name with which he or she is identified. This name, again, at least with speakers of Bengali and English, is constituted by a first name and a surname.

The grammar of English and that of Bengali are also quite similar.

Let us now look at numbers. In both Bengali and English, the decimal system of numbers is used. A few similarities between Bengali and English will also be found when

considering the number words in these languages. In both these languages, there are different words for numbers from 0 to 10. The words for these numbers in English are ‘zero’, ‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three’, ‘four’, ‘five’, ‘six’, ‘seven’, ‘eight’, ‘nine’ and ‘ten’. The corresponding words in Bengali are ‘shunya’, ‘ek’, ‘dui’, ‘tin’, ‘char’, ‘panch’, ‘chhay’, ‘sat’, ‘at’, ‘nay’ and ‘dash’. Then again, there are different words for multiples of 10 upto 100 in both the languages. The words for these numbers in English are ‘twenty’, ‘thirty’, ‘forty’, ‘fifty’, ‘sixty’, ‘seventy’, ‘eighty’, ‘ninety’ and ‘hundred’. The corresponding Bengali words are ‘kudi’ or ‘bish’, ‘trish’, ‘challish’, ‘panchash’, ‘shat’, ‘sattar’, ‘ashi’, ‘nabbai’ and ‘sha’. Now, in both English and Bengali, the words between two multiples of 10 sound like the lower of the two multiples of 10 and a number (between 1 and 10). As illustrative examples, let us take a look at the words for the numbers between 30 and 40. The words in English are ‘thirtyone’, which possibly means thirty and one, ‘thirtytwo’, which possibly means thirty and two, ‘thirtythree’, which possibly means thirty and three, ‘thirtyfour’, which possibly means thirty and four, and so on upto ‘thirtynine’. The corresponding Bengali words are ‘ektrish’, which possibly means ‘ek’ (or one) after ‘trish’ (or thirty), ‘batrish’, which possibly means two after ‘trish’ (or thirty), ‘tetrish’, which possibly means ‘tin’ (or three) after ‘trish’ (or thirty), ‘choutrish’, which possibly means ‘char’ (or four) after ‘trish’ (or thirty), and so on upto ‘attrish’, which possibly means ‘at’ (or eight) after ‘trish’ (or thirty). There is, however, a difference with the words for 39. ‘Thirtynine’ means thirty and nine. But, the corresponding Bengali word is ‘unachallish’, which possibly means one before ‘challish’ (or forty). Now, let us take a close look at the words for the multiples of 10. When pronouncing each of these words, we find that its sound starts with the sound of a number between 1 and 9 (these two numbers included). For example, let us take the word ‘forty’. Its sound starts with the sound of ‘four’. This is possibly because 40 is the fourth multiple of 10. So is it for ‘twenty’, ‘thirty’, ‘fifty’, ‘sixty’, ‘seventy’, ‘eighty’ and ‘ninety’. In Bengali too, we find this pattern. The Bengali word for 40 is ‘challish’. We find when pronouncing this word that its sound starts with the sound of ‘char’ (which is the Bengali word for the number 4). So is it with ‘trish’, ‘panchash’, ‘shat’, ‘sattar’, ‘ashi’ and ‘nabbai’. The idea is possibly the same with ‘kudi’ or ‘bish’ as well.

Let us now look at 100. The English word for this number is ‘hundred’ and it is often expressed as ‘one hundred’. The Bengali word for this number is ‘sha’ and in Bengali, it is often expressed as ‘eksha’. Now, there are no separate words for numbers after 100, such as, 101, 102, 103 etc. In English, they are simply expressed as ‘one hundred and one’, ‘one hundred and two’, ‘one hundred and three’, and so on. Similarly, in Bengali, these numbers are expressed in words as ‘eksha ek’, ‘eksha dui’, ‘eksha tin’, and so on. Then, again, in both the languages, there are no separate words for the numbers 200, 300, 400, and so on upto 900. These numbers are expressed in English as ‘two hundred’, ‘three hundred’, ‘four hundred’, and so on. In Bengali, these numbers are expressed in a similar fashion— ‘dusha’, ‘tinsha’, ‘charsha’, and so on. Now, in both English and Bengali, there is a separate word for 1000. The English word is ‘thousand’ and the Bengali word in ‘hajar’. Then again, there is a separate word for 100000 in both the languages. The English expression for this number is ‘one lakh’ and the Bengali expression is ‘ek laksha’. (Let us note the similarity between the words ‘lakh’ and ‘laksha’ with regard to their pronunciation.) Thus, we see when considering the idea underlying the way in which numbers are expressed in words in Bengali and English that there is a similarity between the two languages.

Another fact which shows that there is a similarity in the psyches of the people who speak English and those who speak Bengali is that both their languages have taken words from each other. It is quite well-known that a number of English words have now become common vocabulary in Bengali such as ‘school’ (this has become a bit changed in Bengali to ‘iskool’), ‘college’, ‘computer’, ‘chair’, ‘table’ (this has become a little changed in Bengali to ‘tabil’), ‘pass’ and ‘fail’. A few English words have also been derived from Bengali (or Hindi) such as ‘cot’ from Bengali (and Hindi) ‘khat’, ‘dacoit’ from Bengali ‘dakat’ (or Hindi ‘dakait’) and ‘jute’ from Bengali ‘jhut’.

I feel that all these facts regarding the two languages go to show that there is a similarity in the psyches of the people who speak Bengali and those who speak English, who are apparently unrelated. I also feel that this idea can be extrapolated to suggest that there is a similarity in the psyches of all the people of the world.